Schorr, Hoch, Sylvia, Beck, Jim

2/3/69

Mr. Vincent J. Salandria
2226 Delancey Pl.
Philadelphia, Pa. 3

Dear Vince,

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This letter is the beginning of the record I promised you I would make of the awful thing you have been doing and have just accomplished. You have just protected the Warren Report, Attorney General Clark and everyone in any remote way connected with the assassinations and their investigations from total destruction. You have done for the government what it could not possibly have accomplished for itself. In the course of so doing, you have probably ruined Jim Garrison's reputation among not just critics, but among all those decent people who do have an understanding of the fact and dom or will come to understand the unparalleled opportunity the exploitation of which you prevented.

Particularly because of your unreined paranoia that almost everyone else is an agent, a terror you assiduously transmitted to Jim, do I emphasize that if you were an agent you could not possibly have accomplished as much. I could build a much better case of agency against you than you have against anyone.

It has, to me, been one of the tragedies that you, one of the first-published critics, were the first to abdicate and were strong in your efforts to persuade the rest of us continuing the fight for truth and the integrity of our society was a futility. It is possible to interpret your recent activity and in-injudicious use of your influence as a conscious or subconscious attempt to justify your own abdication, your cowardice, your quitting.

It is also possible to argue that you are engaging in a self-justification because you not only refused to help but tried to dissuade me when I asked you to act as my lawyer in an effort to bring out what you have just prevented Jim from doing. You are consistent.

In talking to me Friday night you made much of your judgement, and I asked you to examine the record it has made for you. I shall, to a limited degree, for I have no time for the gilding of lilies. It is your own excellent judgement, you said, that you had to use for Jim's benefit. In each of the few of the available instances of your judgement that I will cite I ask you to pretend you are not involved, that you are impartial, and then ask the question, "Is this inconsistent with the action of an agent?"

My first experience with you and your "judgement" was when you prevented Dave Dellinger's publication of a review of WHITEWASH. You then accused me of plagiarism, saying I had drawn on the work of others (non-existent at the time I wrote that book, as you should have known). When I challenged you and disproved your slander, actually in the form of blackmail, intended to force me to give you credit for what I had done, you followed the course of Salandria honor and did not withdraw your foul and self-serving slanders. This first instance of Salandria "judgement" cost me and honest criticism of the Warren Report access to the progressive-peace press, for had "Liberation", in that very early day, paid attention to solid criticism of the Report in honest books, that press might not thereafter have been silent for so long.

Then there is your "judgement" in your writing about the bullets. You, the progressive lawyer, the man who detests the excesses of the FBI, actually dedicated your writing to an FBI agent, Frazier. You praised him ecstatically for his false, deceptive and crucially-corrupting testimony before the Commission. Had Frazier testified really honestly, the frameup of Oswald and with him that of history would have been impossible. You dedicated your writing to him, thus, inherently to his agency and J. Edgar Hoover.

Consistent with this is your handling of the FBI report when you wrote about it. Not once did you meantion the fact that the FBI, the same agency to which, in effect, you dedicated your labor, pretended to provide the definitive report on the murder of the President without accounting for all the shots it knew had been fired and without even accounting for all the injuries it knew had been inflicted.

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At that time my disposition was to clobber you for your stalwart defense and protection of the FBI. How I now regret I did not, that I decided this could be the kind of error the potential for which was carefully built in by the other side, the sort of oversight that was possible with the needless complexity of the material. I accept full responsibility for this and acknowledge my own judgement was deficient, that your glorification of Frazier and his agency should have decided me otherwise.

Quite consistent with all of this is your excellent judgement when you began to study the Zapruder film. You were devoutly convinced and tried to persuade everyone that Connally could not have been hit until, what was it, Frame 287 (if so, you picked a good one, for that or one close does not exist)? Do you have to be reminded of your boorishness when you were invited to participate on a radio program that was supposed to be mine, when you fillibustered with consummate verbosity for most of the four hours on just this? That certainly was one way of being on a program for WHITEWASH, the first in that area and on a station with so widespread an audience. This conduct of yours, whatever caused it, is not inconsistent with that of an agent trying to mislead and to deny attention to genuine critical writing.

With this record of hindering me and a solid work, who did you help? Epstein, and the name should be enough commentary. Thompson, the man who came up with the copout formula that might get the government off the hook . What better examples can be cited of your superb judgement!

I skip to your December whirlwind in New Orleans, where you spent every minute you could to persuading Jim he should trust nobody and that everybody was or is an agent. This was unnecessary, was not warranted by any fact. In doing this you succeeded in separating him from some he might have gotten worthwhile help and judgements from and were your own terror campaign against him and his peace of mind. You could not have done more to frighten and disorient him. Then, for no reason at all, you mixed with your pose of gray eminence a stance as Counteragent No. 1. You went around and put on guard those who might be, for no reason, based on no knowledge, and with such ferocity of determination it was not possible to stop you. You then blew an excellent chance of inflicting the greatest

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With this but part of your record you pretend to have judgement not demeaning to a pre-puberty mongolian idiot? You presume to advise anyone?

You pose as Jim's friend? Yet those things you have so loudly, so ostentaciously done in his name cannot but hurt him. I cannot believe your own experience in the world did not so warn you, as I cannot ignore that with all the vehemence possible you did it.

How you could presume to hold an opinion on the current matter without the most careful analysis of the papers Clark filed in court with your training as a lawyer escapes comprehension. When you did this, with complete abandonment of logic and reason, and I tried to get you to understand what, for the first time, we really had, you were never once responsive. Because others were present, I presume, you never once let me finish a thing without an interruption that was in no single instance germaine. Prior to Fensterwald's arrival, all you would talk about was the inevitability that he, too, is an agent. The reason boiled down to that he had failed to overthrow the government!

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Some trap! Some Judgement! Some Salandria!

Whoever was repponsible for that time-nick phone call to Numa Bertel in the courtroom was also responsible for the preservation of this monster Warren Report and everything flowing from and connected with it. His spectacylar success would have been short-lived had it not been for your valorous backstopping. For the first time, in a court of law - and in Washington! - we had a chance of doing what had never been done and what had never before been possible, and you prevented it! For the first time we could, in a court of law, have established the invalidity and much more - the motive - and you saved the government and its henchmen.

And you dare talk of others as agents?

Had we been able to go ahead, we would have done more than accomplish what is clear from the above. We could have protected Jim. A victory in Washington would have validated all his claims of government interference that today stand without support to the average citizen and the press. Again we would have done more. We would have given him a victory much more significant than convinting Clay Shaw can possibly be. Simultaneously, we would have put him in the position where even a defeat in the Shaw case would have been a victory for him. All these things your great judgement and dedicated friendship spared him.

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I cannot ignore what I heard Friday night and what you did Saturday morning. Bud phoned me early to tell me of your call to him. In the middle of the loudest possible denunciation of any move in Washington, the one place we could not lose by moving, Jim phoned you. You then, pointedly, said you were moving the phone to me close to the one to him so I could hear what you were saying, and you went out of your way to let him know. What you then did and said is as opposed to what you stopped doing and saying to me as it could possible be. Since it was, as you knew, not necessary to move the phone, if you did, for I heard everything anyway, I can only assume your words were for Jim's benefit, in this case synonymous with deception. Then you immediately turn around when you think you had disarmed me and do the opposite again. If this does not provide a measure of judgement, it certainly does of honor and honorable intent. Without putting the phone down you tell me you are unalterably opposed to proceeding and simultaneously tell Jim you see no good reason why he should not! Then you come back on the phone to me and tell me the same thing all over again, we should proceed. You sure wanted to be certain I got the message, didn't you?

Without carrying this further, which is possible, I tell you I think it makes a persuasive argument that you are, indeed, what you call everyone else, an agent. I also tell you what you have often heard me say, whether or not a man does what he does for pay is not as significant as the effect of what he does. You have made your own record, and I shall do with it what I can. It is not important to me to decide whether or not you are or could be an agent. It is suffic-

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You have written the most invidious part of our history. No Schiller, no Thompson, no Epstein, no Roberts of "friend" like Salinger has been able to approach what you have done. It may be years before this can be properly recorded, for there is constructive work to be done. Eventually, it must be. You must get full credit. Youu have earned it.

Bearing on whether or not youare or might be an agent is your qualification. If you are not you do meet a prime prerequisite, a psycholcgical one. There is preference for those with paranoia and a tendency for self-destruction. Like all paranoids, you can be and still not be aware, believe any effort to so suggest is part of a tremenduous campaign in some way to "get" you. But if you are not an agent, you certainly are a very sick man. I doubt you would heed my advice or that of anyone else, but if you are not an agent you are long overdue in seeking competent help. On this subject you are completely irrational, your reactions are without sense or possibility of accomplishment.

As I told you in New Orleans, these frightful things you do, regardless of what impels them (Moo has an apt phrase about how much Custer's scout had earned Custer's trust), so unsettle me they make it impossible for me to work well for several days. If you persist in this dubious career, do me the favor of doing it without any contact at all with me.

It sickens me to write one of us as I have you. I told you I would. I have but a single comment to add: if you are an agent, my hat is off and my cape swirls.

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File
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Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg

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2/3/69

Dear Bud,

Although you know and have known my opinion of Vince for some time, I never dreamed he was capable of this treachery, to have had me listen in on his end of his conversation with Garrison and then, so rapidly, do what he could to effect the opposite.

When you get this you will know I have mailed the letter to him and to Lou Ivon for Jim. Other copies are going to Sylvia, Hoch and Schoener only. The others (save those with whom Hoch will talk) are unworthy of serious consideration.

When we meet again, remind me to tell you of a good development that, fortunately, has no connection with New Orleans.

I want to go further with what I tried to persuade you this morning. This is a crisis point for all of us. This will set back any effort to get access to what has been suppressed more than anything the government can do. I therefore feel it is urgent that we take certain immediate steps.

Whether you go any further or not, I again ask you to at least announce that you are filing a suit for me under the freedom of information act and possibly others. If you feel that you cannot, or if you later feel that you should not go further, I will have had time to try and get another lawyer. It is possible this inexcuseable thing may make that easier. But this announcement coming on the heels of Garrison's abdication will keep all of us a little further from his brush. I have exhausted my administrative remedies, more than once, and satisfy that prerequisite. I also have a very broad area I can cover, of which the pictures and X-rays are but one. The others are without justification, have no fictitious contract to support them or give the government the possibility of invoking. It will be very bad for all of us if we stop here, leaving the record Garrison has made. It will also make things more difficult, encourage the government to do more of the same.

If you will recall how much I wanted us to hold a press conference on the filing of the brief and consider what we might have accomplished with a little attention that was then possible, you can perhaps better understand my urgent desire that we hold one now. This new Garrison thing will focus attention on any press conference keyed to it. With what I can then disclose, we do have a chance of coming out of this rather well and getting a few telling points accross. If we do not do this we join Garrison, become part of what he has done. Had I the capability of doing this alone, I would. It presents a number of possible if not probable developments. One, with the judge as interested as he seems to be, with a little attention in the media, should he be so disposed, he might harken back to what I did get in the record, that he had been lied to, deceived and imposed upon, that the papers filed do not say what he was truly entitled to say. I believe that, given the understand of how understated this was, how he had been really had, he just might get interested and do what I have always understood a judge has the power of doing under those circumstances. At least we put him in a position to.

The criticism has often been made, somethines with truth, that the critics are tails on Garrison's kite. This is an opportunity to show our independence without in any way undercutting him. I think it is especially important for you because you have or had him on your board of directors. Now, with you his lawyer, this happens and you stand for it, you will never, otherwise, convince anyone it is not true. If he should lose or deport or conduct himself badly, you will by that be ruined. It is also the chance, then, to make it possible for your organization to have the pos-

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sibility of getting started. More, however, while we have nothing to lose by a press conference that gets no attention, look how much we have to gain - and who much your committee in particular does. For you to hope to get going, you have to persuade people that you will be doing things. There is little likelihood of your coming up with what I already have and have given you free. A little attention to that and you have a reputation. Although it is my work, you understand that it will enure to you. I think if you understand, as I know you do, that this is the one thing that cannot do me any personal good, that can only take the edge off my writing and book(s), you understand my seriousness.

In such a press conference, save for questions that are asked, we restrict ourselves to a few narrow and comprehensible highlights. This and the new area the changed overtones put us in, make it possible for other things to flow. For example, right now, this very minute, we have a formula that eliminates all the political liability to the new administration by making it a Clark rather than a Warren or Commission matter. With five of the seven members Republicans, Nixon is not about to clobber the Commission, now or later. If the wolves have to be fed, they can right now be fed the expendables. In fact, there is now, for probably the only time, the chance that the new administration and particularly the new Attorney General, not to be hurt and able to get what they might regard as a benefit.

In a different area, in the political area, we are now where we were in court when Numa got that call. Please do not have us in a couple of days or weeks look back with regret. We can now apply intellectual judo and turn all that heft that will be applied against us back where it came. We will not soon be able to expect a duplication.

On a selfish basis, with you trying to start a law practise, this should be helpful rather than hurtful for you. It is more comprehensible than anything we can look forward to trying to present, is so dignified and significant in content that no client you would accept would be antagonized, and others who might not know about you and be considering Washington counsel might just be impressed, favorably.

At this press conference we say, simply, that unlike the statement by the Attorney General, in fact, even his panel, that they "support" the Warren and autopsy reports, their work, limited and entirely inadequate as it was, destroys both. We cite as proof the suppressed knowledge that there was metal in the area of the thorax and the perjury, that there was none; the wrong location of the President's wound, of which we say it cannot on any ground be excused and is fatal to the Warren Report and its solution - and that knowing this the panel and the AG were first silent and then misinformed the people (in the last significant act of the outgoing AG); that there is still suppressed what cannot be, no question of good taste being involved (my request for the memo of transfer, made 1/20 and since never responded to despite repeated requests); we allege, I think but do not insist, that the panel was convoked for other than the stated reason, and that, with quotes from Clark and panel, they did not perform their purpose and made no pretense of so doing; that the accounts of the pictures and X-rays do not stack up-at the very least some are missing and more, we can now account for more than they say they took. The shell game with the pictures should get attention....In addition to everything else, this gives us a chance to reach the remaining Kennedy people, possibly to turn some on. It is certainly the only chance we can expect to get a message to Teddy - and I want to.... Gotta get back to other work. Please see it my way and try. I assure you you will regret it soon if you do not.

Sincerely,

Hal

Harold Weisberg

PS brief and Xerox came today

COPY